



MAGIC VALLEY

BLAINE, CAMAS, CASSIA, GOODING, JEROME, LINCOLN, MINIDOKA, & TWIN FALLS COUNTIES

LABOR FORCE & EMPLOYMENT

As shown in Magic Valley Table 1, the seasonally adjusted unemployment rate for November 2000 was 4.4 percent, which is two-tenths of a percentage point higher than October, and three-tenths of a percentage point higher than November 1999. The primary reason for the higher rate is that the major food processor in the Magic Valley Labor Market Area (LMA) had a scheduled maintenance layoff during November.

The sector that showed the largest increase from October to November was *Retail Trade*, as stores began hiring workers for the holidays. Other sectors that had monthly increases were: *Government Administration*, *Government Education*, and *Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate*. From year to year, the sector that had the largest jump in numbers was *Government Education*. *Food Processing* showed a healthy 3.0 percent increase from 1999. The largest year-over-year decline was in *Wholesale Trade* and *Retail Trade*. *Retail Trade* was lower than a year ago as retailers have been cautious in anticipation of an economic slowdown. For the most part, the Magic Valley economy continues to grow, although at a slower rate than in years past.

AREA DEVELOPMENTS

Twin Falls County

- Construction of the first building in the River Vista at Westpark office complex began recently on North Washington Street along the Snake River Canyon rim. The project is significant for its location in a growing part of Twin Falls and for its first anchor tenant, Nevada-based SMI Joist Co. Ground-breaking took place in November 2000 on a two-story, 14,000-square foot building of which SMI Joist is to occupy approximately 5,000-square feet. The project is

Magic Valley Table 1: Labor Force & Employment
Twin Falls, Jerome, and Gooding counties

	Nov 2000*	Oct 2000	Nov 1999	% Change From	
				Last Month	Last Year
INDIVIDUALS BY PLACE OF RESIDENCE					
Seasonally Adjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	50,080	49,330	48,660	1.5	2.9
Unemployment	2,220	2,070	1,980	7.2	12.1
% of Labor Force Unemployed	4.4	4.2	4.1		
Total Employment	47,860	47,260	46,680	1.3	2.5
Unadjusted					
Civilian Labor Force	49,540	49,420	48,150	0.2	2.9
Unemployment	1,930	1,650	1,710	17.0	12.9
% of Labor Force Unemployed	3.9	3.3	3.6		
Total Employment	47,610	47,770	46,440	-0.3	2.5
JOBS BY PLACE OF WORK					
Nonfarm Payroll Jobs**					
Goods-Producing Industries	7,300	7,440	7,190	-1.9	1.5
Mining & Construction	2,120	2,180	2,090	-2.8	1.4
Manufacturing	5,180	5,260	5,100	-1.5	1.6
Durable Goods	780	790	780	-1.3	0.0
Nondurable Goods	4,400	4,470	4,320	-1.6	1.9
Food Processing	3,450	3,490	3,350	-1.1	3.0
All Other Nondurable Goods	950	980	970	-3.1	-2.1
Service-Producing Industries	30,020	29,800	29,940	0.7	0.3
Transportation, Comm., & Utilities	3,090	3,110	3,080	-0.6	0.3
Wholesale Trade	2,280	2,340	2,430	-2.6	-6.2
Retail Trade	7,970	7,710	8,200	3.4	-2.8
Finance, Insurance, & Real Estate	1,390	1,370	1,420	1.5	-2.1
Services	8,660	8,740	8,740	-0.9	-0.9
Government Administration	3,680	3,620	3,620	1.7	1.7
Government Education	2,950	2,910	2,450	1.4	20.4

*Preliminary Estimate

**Full- or part-time jobs of people who worked for or received wages in the pay period including the 12th of the month

slated to have 140,000-square feet of professional office and other commercial space, including restaurant and retail uses. Eventually, six to eight buildings are to be built on the 10.5-acre site.

- Oklahoma-based Sonic Drive-In Restaurants announced that it had awarded a three restaurant area development agreement to new franchise partners John and Nancy Martin and Bob House, all of Enid, Oklahoma, who will open their first Sonic Drive-In at 2392 Addison Avenue East in Twin Falls in mid-April 2001. Sonic Drive-Ins offer sandwiches and feature signature items such as Extra-Long Cheese Cones, hand-battered onion rings and tater tots, and frozen and fountain items. The drive-ins are unique because customers drive into covered spaces and are waited on by carhops on roller skates. The owners hope to open additional restaurants in the Twin Falls, Jerome, and Mini-Cassia areas. They will initially hire about 70 employees.

- The Australian-themed Outback Restaurant has announced intentions to locate a restaurant in Twin Falls, making it the first tenant of the Canyon Park North business development project on the Snake River Canyon Rim. Construction of the Outback Restaurant will begin immediately, and the new restaurant is projected to open by February 27, 2001.
- The College of Southern Idaho has begun recruitment of a regional economic development leader. The candidate will work closely with the six Magic Valley counties to attract and retain businesses and bring good-paying jobs into the area. A recent report generated by an Atlanta-based consulting firm, Lockwood-Greene, suggested the position. The firm was hired to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Magic Valley area for business attraction and retention. The study concluded that the area, (Twin Falls, Gooding, Lincoln, Jerome, Cassia, and Minidoka counties), should create a professional organization for economic development with representatives from the cities and the counties, recruit new businesses in certain targeted industries and help existing industries stay healthy and growing. The study further recommended that an overall economic development coordinator be hired to oversee these functions. The Business Plus II program of the Twin Falls Chamber of Commerce job-creation campaign and the College of Southern Idaho are leading players in the creation of the Southern Idaho Economic Development Organization and the recruitment of an overall coordinator. It is hoped that the new coordinator will be on the job by mid-January 2001.

Jerome, Gooding, Lincoln, Blaine, & Camas Counties

- A long-time sporting goods store and an antique shop in Jerome have announced intentions to close early in 2001. The 70-year-old Ram Sports Center and Rose Antique Mall are closing and will be liquidated in January 2001. The businesses have said that the street breakups that occurred in 1999 as a result of the Jerome Revitalization Project caused customers to leave and not come back, thus forcing liquidation.
- A new cellular phone company has opened in Jerome. The new store known as "All Things Wireless" is an independent dealer of Verizon products and services. The new store is located in the Lincoln Plaza.

Cassia and Minidoka Counties

- The Mini-Cassia Job Service moved into its new building on December 11, 2000. The building offers a spacious customer area and improved conference rooms and interview room. The old building will be demolished and a parking lot paved in that location. The Mini-Cassia Job Service will hold an open house later in the year when all construction and demolition activity is completed.
- A new agricultural hardware store has opened in Burley. The new store, known as A.M.I. (Agriculture Manufacturing and Industry Supply), opened at 709 Overland Avenue.
- Amalgamated Sugar Company of Paul will employ a new trucking company to haul sugar beets, ending a relationship with Circle A Construction that dates back to the late 1960s. Transystems, Inc., a company from Great Falls, Montana, won a bid to take over Amalgamated Sugar's hauling operation. It will commence hauling on September 1, 2001. Circle A, which typically hires about 900 workers annually, may not hire as many seasonal workers as in the past. Transystems, Inc. has pledged to hire local workers, so that any negative impact caused by Circle A Construction layoffs should be offset.
- Governor Dirk Kempthorne recently appointed Oakley-area rancher Scott Bedke as District 25 Representative to the Idaho Legislature. Mr. Bedke replaces Jim Kempton, who resigned to take a seat on the Northwest Power Planning Council. Mr. Bedke is a finance graduate from Brigham Young University and president of the Idaho Cattle Association, a director of the National Cattleman's Beef Association, and a member of the Idaho Federal Lands Taskforce. Mr. Bedke will begin his duties immediately.

Gregory Rogers, Labor Market Analyst
 771 N. College Road, Twin Falls, ID 83303
 (208) 736-3000
 E-mail: grogers@labor.state.id.us